



The Education Trust

Closing the gaps in opportunity and achievement, pre-k through college.

June 26, 2018

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and
Pensions Committee
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray:

The Education Trust, an organization dedicated to closing long-standing gaps in opportunity and achievement separating low-income students and students of color from their peers, applauds the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee for considering a bipartisan bill to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.

In today's economy, high-quality career preparation is more important than ever to ensuring all students are equipped with the right knowledge and skills for success after high school. Yet the history, and in some cases still the reality, of career and technical education (CTE) is one of diverting students of color and students with disabilities away from college preparatory courses and into low-level "career" courses that aren't actually aligned with the job market. Moreover, there is a lack of accurate and usable outcome data to measure CTE program quality, and too little coordination across education and workforce systems.

As a result, policymakers, educators, business leaders, and advocates don't have enough information on how all students are faring in CTE. And where that information does exist, our research has shown that for far too many students, the CTE experience is a low-quality, disjointed one.

The bill you are considering is an improvement over current law and does address some of these issues. The bill represents a step forward in addressing data quality, focusing on actual workforce needs, better integrating the employer community, and providing opportunity for innovation.

We appreciate the increased attention in this bill to the performance of individual groups of students in CTE programs, as compared to current law. This represents a continuation of a key part of Congress' foundational agreement from the Every Student Succeeds Act: A focus on access and success for individual groups of students is critical and must be a part of our CTE system. Grantees should have to take proactive steps to ensure low-income students and students of color aren't disproportionately represented in low-quality programs unaligned with current workforce needs. Also, gaps in performance for individual groups of students and gaps in performance among groups of students must be addressed. We urge you to maintain this focus as the bill advances.

As you move forward with this legislation, we urge you to address one issue. While the bill does include opportunities for innovation, we believe a greater investment is necessary to build an evidence base of CTE models that work, particularly for historically underserved students. While examples of innovation exist in the CTE programs, too few initiatives seek to truly expand the means and pathways to advance student mastery in CTE.

Reimagining our CTE system is absolutely necessary given our changing economy. This bill is an important step forward, but there is still work to be done to make it a tool to truly transform CTE to meet workforce demands for all students. We look forward to working with you on further improving this bill as the legislative process moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John B. King Jr.", written in a cursive style.

John B. King Jr.
President and CEO
The Education Trust